Appln. No.: 10/622,331
Response Dated March 1, 2005
Reply to Office Action dated December 1, 2004

Remarks/Arguments

Claims 1-7 are pending in this application. Reconsideration and allowance of all of the claims present in the application are respectfully requested in light of the following remarks.

Applicants' have corrected the specification to correct the error in the copy as originally filed.

Claim Rejections under 35 USC §103(a)

Claims 1-7 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Sansone et al. (U.S. 5,019,991). For the following reasons, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

The present invention provides a system and method for performing closed loop accounting of a postal transaction. The closed loop postage metering system, according to claim 1, comprises the following components. A meter provider infrastructure including a meter database. A postal infrastructure that communicates with the meter provider infrastructure. A mailer system that communicates with the meter provider infrastructure and the postal infrastructure. The mailer system includes a postage meter, which accounts for and prints postage value for a mail piece and prints on the mail piece information identifying services requested for the mail piece. **The postal infrastructure**, during the processing of the mail piece, determines an adjusted postage value for the mail piece based on the occurrence of events related to the requested services and **sends the adjusted postage value to the meter for the meter to account for the adjusted postage value.** As discussed below, Sansone et al. ('991) does not disclose or suggest the postal infrastructure sending the adjusted postage value to the meter for the meter to account for the adjusted postage value.

According to claim 4, the present invention further provides a method for performing closed loop accounting of a postal transaction that comprises the following steps. A mail piece is created. Associated with the mail piece, a list of planned events is created, as well as, parameters and decision functions associated with the planned events. A postage meter prints on the mail piece certain mail piece information including a unique identification of the mail piece, evidence

Appln. No.: 10/622,331
Response Dated March 1, 2005
Reply to Office Action dated December 1, 2004

of postage payment, identification of the postage meter and services requested for the mailpiece. The mail piece is inducted into a postal infrastructure, and is scanned to determine if one of the planned events has occurred.   If a planned event has occurred postal infrastructure sensors obtain the mail piece information including identification of the postage meter. The postal infrastructure sends a message to the meter relating to the occurrence of the planned event, the message including the mail piece information. According to **claim 5**, the meter performs accounting for the occurrence of the planned event. According to **claim 6,** if a planned event has not occurred the postal infrastructure sends a message to the meter relating to the non-occurrence of the planned event; and the meter performs accounting for the non-occurrence of the planned event. As discussed below, Sansone et al. ('991) does not disclose or suggest the postal infrastructure sending the elements underlined in this paragraph.

According to claim 7, the present invention further provides a method for managing postal workshare discounts that comprises the following steps. A batch of mail is prepared in a manner intended for the batch of mail to qualify for certain postal workshare discounts. At least one of a unique mail piece identification or unique batch identification is applied on each mail piece in the batch of mail. The batch of mail is accounted in a meter for payment for based on an estimated workshare discount and submitting the payment. The batch of mail is inducted for postal processing. During the postal processing, a determination is made of the actual workshare discount that the batch of mail is entitled to, and a correction discount amount is sent to the meter to update the accounting in the meter. As discussed below, Sansone et al. ('991) does not disclose or suggest the postal infrastructure sending the elements underlined in this paragraph.

Addressing the Examiner's remarks in paragraph 5.1.1 of the Office Action, the first sentence refers to Sansone et al. ('991) disclosing the processing of a "batch of mail by a postal infrastructure, that is the post office, in order to certify that the correct amount of postage for the items of mail in the batch have been applied to the mail prepared by a mailer." Applicants respectfully submit that this understanding of Sansone et al. ('991) is incorrect. The system for certifying correctly accounted postage payment, as disclosed in Sansone et al. ('991), is a mailer's system not a postal infrastructure system. Fig. 1 in Sansone et al. ('991) is a block

Appln. No.: 10/622,331
Response Dated March 1, 2005
Reply to Office Action dated December 1, 2004

diagram illustrating the operations occurring within the certification device. Fig. 2 is a block diagram illustrating the informational flow governing the processing by which the device in Fig. 1 operates. Fig. 5 is a general block diagram of a postal certification verification apparatus. Thus, Sansone et al. ('991) distinguishes the certification by the mailer using the device and process in Figs. 1 and 2 from the postal infrastructure apparatus in Fig. 5.

Applicants direct the Examiner's attention to the detailed description of Figs. 1, 2 and 5 in Sansone et al. ('991), wherein it is clear that the object set forth in col. 1, lines 39 to 43, namely to "provide a method and apparatus for correctly and automatically calculating the proper postage on a mailing based on appropriate guidelines, and certifying said mail piece as correct" is performed by the mailer and not the postal infrastructure.

First, with regard to Fig. 1, the certification device is shown in block diagram form. From the description of Fig. 1 at col. 3, line 10 to col. 4, line 48, Sansone et al. ('991) clearly discloses that the certification device is operated by the mailer. Each of the blocks of the block diagram represent components of the certification device or the mail pieces. At col. 3, line 59

> The CPU 12 responds to the weight data from scale 30, in accordance with a pre-stored program and postal data previously stored in a look up table in memory, for activating a printing activating mechanism 32 which sets print wheels 34, cooperating with meter imprinting station 36, for applying appropriate printed postal indicia data to the envelope as it traverses along the path 18 into the meter imprinting station. Normally before or concurrently with stamping, the value of the printed postage is debited from the descending register 50.

Since the device includes the mailer's meter, as indicated by descending register 50, meter imprinter 36 and print wheels 34, the certification device of Fig. 1 must be at the mailer facility. As previously indicated, FIG. 2 is a block diagram illustrating the informational flow governing the processing by which the device in FIG. 1 operates. At col. 4, lines 43-47, Sansone et al. ('991) discloses that "the system of FIG. 2 may be enclosed in a secure housing 73", which further proves that the certification device of Fig. 1 is a single device an not a system which could include the postal infrastructure.

Sansone et al. ('991) proceeds to describe how the postal infrastructure uses the certification by the mailer's device in Fig. 1. This is shown in Fig. 5 and described at col. 6, line 46 to col. 7, line 2.

In paragraph 5.1.3 of the Office Action, the Examiner contends that

...it would have been inherent to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made that the system of Sansone et al ('991) that the post office would appropriately notify the mailer and meter of any additional required postage value that has been applied to the items of mail, so that the additional postage would be proper accounted for by the mailer and meter and post office would not process any mail that has not been properly accounted for by the mailer and meter. It is further noted that for the mailer to be notified, the post office must have access to a mailer/meter database so that the correct mailer/meter is charged for the addition postage value that has been applied to the items of mail.

Applicants respectfully disagree with this contention. Sansone et al ('991) does not disclose or suggest the closed loop metering system of the present invention in which the meter performs accounting for the occurrence or non-occurrence of a planned event.. In fact, Sansone et al ('991) teaches against the present invention because Sansone et al ('991) teaches that the adjustment in postage in the descending register of mailer's meter is performed by the mailer's system **prior to the mail being inducted into the postal infrastructure.** See the assertions above describing the mailers apparatus and process in Figs. 1 and 2 and the postal infrastructure in Fig. 5.

Beginning at col. 1, line 61, Sansone et al ('991) discloses the problem being solved.

This invention relates to data processing system for automatically correcting and accounting for improperly applied postage in short paid mail.... Short paid mail is mail that does not have sufficient postage to cover the cost of shipping under current laws and regulations.... Short paid mail is identified by the postal service as part of their acceptance procedure. However, the acceptance procedure varies from postal service to postal service and is extremely costly....Short paid mail is corrected by either returning it to the sender where more postage is added or by sending it on to the recipient for payment by the recipient,...It is therefore the object of the present invention to provide a method and apparatus for correctly and automatically calculating the proper postage on a mailing based on appropriate guidelines, and certifying said mail piece as correct.

Appln. No.: 10/622,331
Response Dated March 1, 2005
Reply to Office Action dated December 1, 2004

There is nothing in Sansone et al ('991) that discloses or suggests that apparatus for correctly and automatically calculating the proper postage on a mailing and certifying said mail piece as correct involves the postal infrastructure.

In the Examiner's response to Applicants' arguments, the Examiner refers to step 1008 of Fig. 2 in Sansone et al ('991), where a decision is made as to whether or not the mail piece has postage already printed thereon, and step 1018 where if preprinted the process confirms whether the postage printed thereon is the correct postage based upon the count and weight data previously provided and if so, the confirmation is forwarded to step 1014 to perform the certification or to step 1012 to debit the descending register accordingly. The Examiner also refers to step 1010 to print postage and step 1012 to debit the register when, at step 1008, it is determined that the postage is not preprinted. The Examiner appears to contend although this certification is applied by the mailer, the post office may still perform a verification of the batch and not rely on the certification applied by the mailer.

Applicants' respectfully submit that verification by the postal infrastructure, despite the certification by the mailer, is of no consequence to the patentability of the present invention. If the postal infrastructure determines that the certification is in error, Sansone et al ('991) teaches away from the present invention because all that Sansone et al ('991) teaches is that short paid mail i s corrected by either returning it to the sender where more postage is added or by sending it on to the recipient for payment by the recipient. See col. 1, lines 34-36. This is further supported in the description of Fig. 5, at col. 6, lines

> Upon receipt of the postal imprint indicia, the CPU checks to confirm the correctness of the indicia as conforming to an authorized postal meter certification apparatus, previously established by the user. The mail piece continues on the reader B 318, which reads the pre-coded indicia provided in the certification code which is stored in CPU 316 memory 316B. The CPU then performs a comparison interrelationship, utilizing encryption techniques such as are described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,878,246, assigned to the assignee of the present application, to confirm that the certification is authentic. Upon confirmation of authenticity the CPU 316 activates the accept/reject mechanism 320 for appropriate handling. It can also output to a printer (not shown) for generation of reports.

Appln. No.: 10/622,331
Response Dated March 1, 2005
Reply to Office Action dated December 1, 2004

When the mail piece is rejected in Sansone et al ('991), the logical conclusion based on the background of the invention is that the mail piece is either returned to the sender where more postage is added or is sent on to the recipient for payment by the recipient. No other conclusions can be made about a rejected mail piece in Sansone et al ('991).

In conclusion, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Sansone et al ('991) that an adjusted postage value is sent from the postal infrastructure to the meter for the meter to account for the adjusted postage value (Claim 1). Furthermore, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Sansone et al ('991) where a message is sent to the meter relating to the occurrence of a planned event (Claim 4). Finally, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Sansone et al ('991) for sending a correction discount amount to the meter to update the accounting in the meter (claim 7).

Based on the foregoing, Sansone et al ('991) neither discloses nor suggests the present invention. For at least the above reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 4 are allowable over Sansone et al ('991). Claims 1-3 and 5-7, dependent upon claims 1 and 4 respectively, are allowable on their own merits.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the claims of this application are now in a condition for allowance and favorable action thereon is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles R. Malandra, Jr.
Reg. No. 31,038
Attorney of Record
Telephone (203) 924-3217

PITNEY BOWES INC.
Intellectual Property and
Technology Law Department
35 Waterview Drive
P.O. Box 3000
Shelton, CT 06484-8000